

MEMORANDUM

TO: District of Columbia Board of Zoning Adjustment

FROM: Karen Thomas, Case Manager
Joel Lawson, Associate Director Development Review

DATE: October 16, 2012

SUBJECT: BZA Case 18430 – 154-156 Forrester Street SW- Construction of two new semi-detached residences on two existing sub-standard vacant lots.

I. OFFICE OF PLANNING RECOMMENDATION

The Office of Planning **recommends approval** of the required variances:

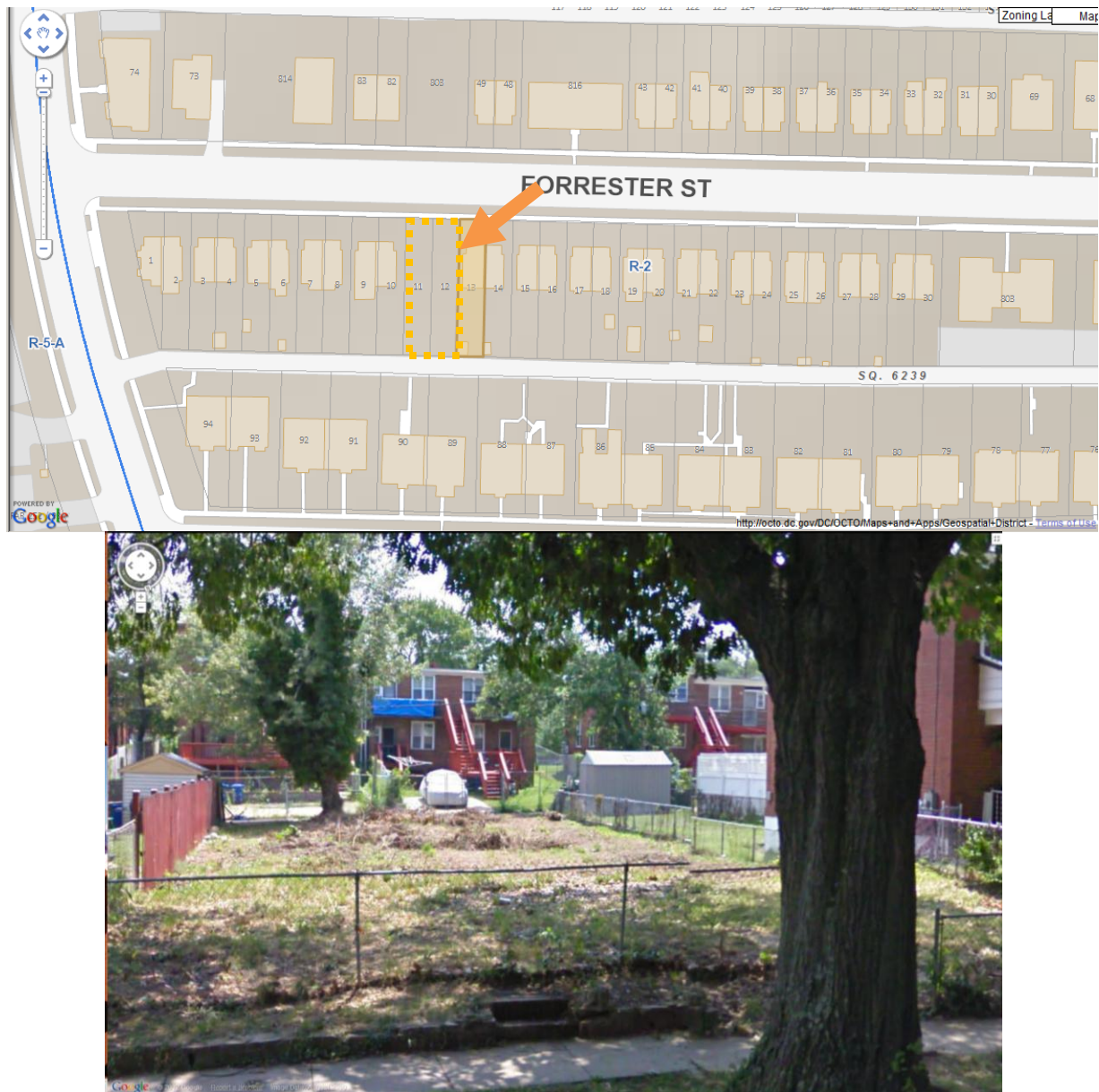
- § 401.3 - Lot Area – 3,000 sf required, 2,464sf provided;
- § 401.3 – Lot Width – 30 feet required, 22 feet provided;
- § 405.9 - Side Yard – 8 feet required, 4' provided for each unit.

II. LOCATION AND SITE DESCRIPTION

Address	154-156 Forrester Street SW
Legal Description	Square 6239 Lots 011, 012
Ward/ANC	8/ANC 8D
Zoning	R-2: permits matter-of-right development of detached and semi-detached single-family residential structures.
Lot Characteristics	Rectangular lots, with rear access via a 16-foot wide public alley.
Adjacent Properties	Semi-detached residential homes abut the lots to the east and west. A 16-foot wide alley at the rear, parallel to Forrester Street, bisects the square.
Neighborhood Character	The neighborhood is a mix of semi-detached single family and low density semi-detached apartment homes on larger lots.

II. APPLICATION-IN-BRIEF

The applicant, Jomo Oludipe proposes to construct two single-family semi-detached residences, one on each vacant sub-standard lot in Square 6239, Lots 011 and 012. The lots are located in the R-2 district, which permits matter-of-right residential development of single-family, detached and semi-detached structures.



ZONING MAP AND SITE PHOTO

IV. ZONING

Variance relief from the lot area and lot width requirements under subsection 401.3, and from the side yard requirements under section 405, is required to allow the construction of the new semi-detached residences. The following table lists R-2 bulk and yard requirements.

Section	Item	R-2 Regulations	Proposed (Each Lot)	Relief
400	Height	40', 3 stories	31'2", 2 stories	Conforming
401	Lot Area	3,000 sf	2,464 sf	Existing non-conforming
401	Lot Width	30'	22'	Existing non-conforming
403	Lot Occupancy	40%	38.5%	Conforming
404	Rear Yard	20'	44' min.	Conforming
405.9	Side Yard	8'	4'	Required

V. ANALYSIS

In order to be granted a variance, the request must meet the three-part test described in §3103.

1. Does the property exhibit specific uniqueness with respect to exceptional narrowness, shallowness, shape, topography or other extraordinary or exceptional situations or conditions?

The subject lots existed prior to 1958 and were originally created as part of the neighborhood that was developed around 1941. Records indicate that two semi-detached homes in separate ownership were originally developed on the lots but they have been demolished and the lots have remained vacant since the 1970's. The lots' area and width are in exact proportion to the other lots in this section of the square. This is the exceptional situation of the lots, as they were created prior to the area requirements of the existing regulations.

Minimum Lot Area and Width Variance Analysis (§401.3)

2. Does the extraordinary or exceptional situation described in the first part of the variance test impose a practical difficulty which is unnecessarily burdensome to the applicant?

If the sub-standard lots were combined, it would not conform to the neighborhood's character with respect to the lot size, lot width, and housing type. All lots along this side of Forrester Street measure exactly 2,464 square feet in area and 22 feet in width. The lots have remained vacant for an extended period and development of the lots may not be viable unless relief was granted.

3. Can the relief be granted without substantial detriment to the public good and without substantially impairing the intent, purpose and integrity of the Zoning Regulations and Map?

The intent of this regulation is to maintain a row pattern of semi-detached homes, which currently exists and now proposed for the long-vacant lots' development. In this instance, if the lots were combined since they are now in common ownership, the single lot and subsequent residential development would be out of character with the existing pattern on the block. Granting the relief would allow semi-detached residential structures permitted in this zone and would conform to all other bulk requirements for the zone. Therefore, relief could be granted without substantial detriment to the public good and without impairing the intent of the Regulations.

Side Yard Variance Analysis (§405)

- 2. Does the extraordinary or exceptional situation described in the first part of the variance test impose a practical difficulty which is unnecessarily burdensome to the applicant?**

The lots' width creates a burden to the applicant in providing the required 8-foot wide side yard, as it would result in 14-foot wide residential structures not typical of the neighborhood's residential character.

- 3. Can the relief be granted without substantial detriment to the public good and without substantially impairing the intent, purpose and integrity of the Zoning Regulations and Map?**

The side yard provision was intended to protect the privacy, light and air of the owner of the adjacent property. In this case, the abutting properties to the east and west of the proposed residences also possess side yards of similar widths, thereby providing an effective separation of up to eight feet between the proposed semi-detached dwellings and the adjacent neighbors. Large windows are not proposed which would adversely impact the privacy of the neighbors. The development of the lots would close a long vacant gap in the street pattern and improve the streetscape of Forrester Street. The requested side yard relief could be granted without substantial detriment to the public good and integrity to the Regulations and Map.

VI. OTHER DISTRICT AGENCY REPORTS

The Office of Planning has not received reports from any other District agency.

VII. COMMUNITY COMMENTS

The applicant informed OP that the proposal was presented to the ANC8 at its regularly scheduled meeting in September, 2012.